Canada Remembers the *Komagata Maru*

On May 1 Canada Post releasee a single $2.50 international rate stamp to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the tragic journey of the *Komagata Maru*. Described as "a pivotal moment in British Columbia and Canada's history," the Japanese steamship arrived in Vancouver on May 23, 1914 with 376 passengers—all British subjects, mostly Sikhs from Punjab, India. Due to regulations intended to stem the flow of immigrants from Asia, including a "continuous journey" clause and the requirement that immigrants have $200 in cash, almost all of the passengers were denied entrance. The passengers were kept on board the ship for 60 days before the ship was escorted out of the harbor by the Royal Canadian Navy. When the ship arrived back in India, 20 of the passengers were shot and others were imprisoned.

Issued on the first day of Asian Heritage Month, the stamp not only recalls the journey of the *Komagata Maru*, but also celebrates the contributions of the South Asian community to Canada in the ensuing years. Harbhajan Gill, president of the Komagata Maru Heritage Foundation, summed things up when he stated, "Even though it was a sad event, Canadians should take away a happy message. We've learned from those mistakes and made positive, inspiring change in 100 years. We're a new Canada and one that treats everyone equal."

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